

INTERVIEW WITH MRS. CLARA ALLINGTON

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Conducted by:

Dr. James L. Dodson

--and--

Miss Paula Boyer

INTERVIEW WITH CLARA ALLINGTON - 3/26/77  
Early Recollections of the San Fernando Valley

Dodson: Now, I wonder Mrs. Allington if you would give us your full name and tell us when you first came to the Valley?

Allington: Clara Kathryn Allington. We came in...

Dodson: 1919 wasn't it?

Allington: 1918, yes, I was trying to think of the month. I think it was September.

Dodson: And I think we found out that you had made a visit here even two years before that, is that right?

Allington: Yes, in 1916, then we went back on the train and we landed in Jackson, the 2nd of November and it was snowing and cold and my husband said, "I'll give us just two years to get back to California." In two years we were back here in 1918 to live.

Dodson: I can see the place must have made a good impression then with the contrast of the snowing when you got back there.

Allington: Yes it did. And I like warm weather so it didn't take much encouragement from me to come back and thus we have been very happy here.

Dodson: Can you tell us what it was like when you first saw it in 1916? What made a good impression on you that you wanted to come back?

Allington: Well, the pretty flowers. Sherman Way was lined with roses on both sides of the street, the full length from North Hollywood out to Canoga Park and the climate was just beautiful and it, I don't know, we just loved it. We met some nice people here, for the short time we were here and just liked it, that's all.

Dodson: You weren't afraid of earthquakes that you don't have in Michigan?

Allington: No, we heard about them, but they didn't seem to bother us.

Paula: I know there's cold weather in Michigan. I can imagine the contrast.

Dodson: Yes, at the time of year, I can imagine there was quite a contrast when you got back.

Allington: Yes.

Dodson: Well, can you tell us what sort of business your husband went into when he got here?



Allington: Well, he worked for Huffaker's for about three months, as a mechanic, until he finally sought out a little overland place, I think it was, at that time it was going out of business, very small little place but about all we could afford at that time. And he had that, I think for a couple years and finally, I think he took the Dodge agency after that for 2 or 3 years and then he managed to get the Stud franchise in 1923 and he's had that up until the time that he went out of business in 1955.

Dodson: He must have been one of the earliest automobile dealers in Van Nuys wasn't he then?

Allington: Yes, he was. Huffaker, Ford agency was here, that I know of, I don't know of, why I guess the Buick must have been, but I don't know of any others that I recall any others.

Dodson: Still had probably quite a few horses around, wouldn't at that time, that early 1918?

Allington: Well...

Dodson: Or were they just beginning to pass out of the picture?

Allington: Yes, they were. They used them for little ranches, you know, at that time. We didn't see them on the street too much. I think they were pretty much out.

Dodson: Were there very many ranches, or was the place fairly well built up when you came?

Allington: Oh no, it was all Walnut orchards and Walnut groves, I mean, and orange and lemon groves and olive trees and lots of open fields and we would have wind storms. Why the dust would blow and the tumbleweeds would come tumbling down and, but it was quite open and the towns were very small. I think, oh goodness I don't think there were very many people in the Van Nuys, six thousand, that wouldn't be very many would it?

Dodson: No, that would be a fairly small town?

Allington: Yes that was about it when we arrived.

Dodson: Did you arrive just after the conclusion of the war in 1918?

Allington: Well, it wasn't over with then when we arrived. I think we came in September and the war ended in November. November 11th wasn't it?

Dodson: Yes. You remember the armistice in the Valley and how the Valley reacted to it?

Allington: Well, no I don't remember too much about it. It was so small, I guess, I didn't do too much about it.

Dodson: Too small to have a big celebration?

Allington: Yes, yes, we were all happy it was over.



Paula: Did you do all your shopping here in Van Nuys or did you have to go elsewhere?

Allington: We went to Los Angeles mostly. Or the Broadway in Hollywood.

Paula: Was it a long drive then? Was it easy to get to, Los Angeles?

Allington: Yes, it was easy because there wasn't much traffic but it was slow because Fords didn't go very fast, you know and we didn't have the freeways that you have now and so it took a little while but.

Paula: How fast did the car go then?

Allington: Well, I think when we came out, we drove out, you know from Michigan out here and if we made 35 miles an hour we were going fast.

Dodson: Were most of the roads unpaved that you came over driving out here?

Allington: Oh, yes. The only paved ones we had were just through the towns. It was all dirt otherwise. Once in a while they would have oil roads.

Paula: That must have been something going through the desert. Was it hard to get through the desert?

Allington: Well, it was hot, but that's about all. They were just dirt roads, but they sort of kept up. I mean they would go over them with machinery to keep them level. But it was dirty, dusty.

Dodson: Were the engines of cars then very reliable. Did you have trouble coming out with engine problems, breakdowns and so on?

Allington: No, not very much. It didn't bother us much because my husband was a mechanic so we had a few parts with us so if the ones that he thought might give out we carried with us and so if anything wrong he would be able to fix them. He had extra tires and the tires were very small, they aren't, weren't big they like are now. So just pump them up with the bicycle.

Dodson: Do you remember what schools your children went to?

Allington: Oh yes, they went to the Van Nuys elementary and high school, here in Van Nuys, you mean. Until they were old enough to go to college. Two of them graduated from U.C.L.A. and one continues out in San Fernando.

Dodson: Yes we're just interested in knowing how their education might have differed from yours or your husbands?

Allington: Oh, well they were better educated than we were and one is a school teacher, still teaches. And another is a lawyer and one is in business, he has his own garage and the other



Allington: two are just, one's complex and the other is a fire, and what do you call it now, distributor for parts.

Paula: Were your children born at home or was there a hospital out here?

Allington: They were all born at home.

Paula: Did you have a doctor?

Allington: Yes, Dr. Canby was one of the old-time doctors here in Van Nuys, a senior doctor. He delivered four of them here in Van Nuys and Stuart was born in the East.

Dodson: Is that Dr. Charles Canby?

Allington: His father.

Dodson: I see, we interviewed a Dr. Canby a few weeks ago and he was the son of the man you know.

Allington: Yes, well he was such a nice boy, of course, he was just young when my children were being born, because he is just a little older than our oldest, I think.

Dodson: I see. I'm sort of interested in knowing what some of the principal stores here in Van Nuys were when you came out. You recall which ones were in existence, where they were?

Allington: Well, there was Moore's Department Store and Zinger's (Singer's?) and let's see and I think Zinger's was a department store.

Dodson: Were these located on Van Nuys Boulevard?

Allington: Oh, yes. Moore's was quite a big department store on the corner, I can't think what corner they were on and let's see I'm trying to think what the jewelry store's name was, if I'd known that ahead of time I could have looked that up. There was Simpson furniture store, of course, and I don't know if they were the very first ones, but then they came in a little bit later. Nordvold Piano, now Mr. Nordvold was one of the very first. His family, he and his wife and his parents were the two first families in Van Nuys after the auction. Did you interview, well I don't know whether he's alive, maybe he isn't, I don't know, because he moved away. So I don't know whether he's alive or not but anyway they were the very first families in Van Nuys.

Dodson: You spoke of the auction, what did you mean by that?

Allington: The auction of this land. The auction of the land in Van Nuys.

Dodson: Were the lots auctioned off? Is that the way it was done?

Allington: Yes, in 1911. They first they built the electric railway out here, you know, and then they people free transportation out



Allington: here to look the land over and free barbeque lunch for them in order to get them to buy land they auctioned it off and that's when alot of people bought land and the Nordvold's were the first ones. The first people to actually live here after the auction of that day. Alot of people bought it at that time.

Dodson: I see, do you remember any other early stores in the Van Nuys area?

Allington: I think these were the first stores in Van Nuys.

Dodson: Do you remember the Organ Factory?

Allington: Oh yes. I know of a store, Bolander's Grocery Store. That was one of the old ones. Remember, oh you don't remember.

Dodson: No, I'm afraid I hadn't come out at that time.

Allington: They used to deliver our groceries. I should have remembered them. They always delivered our groceries, for years. Let's see, I can't think of any others. Oh yes, the Organ Factory that was out here when we came.

Dodson: Was that a rather large establishment?

Allington: Oh yes. It was a big place.

Paula: At that time did you have alot of home deliveries? I mean people don't have home deliveries anymore? Did you have alot of home deliveries at that time?

Allington: No, only Bolander's. They were the only store that ever delivered around here, I guess. Until a few years ago they used to deliver, until they went out of business, then they finally charged to deliver. After all these other markets came in. They used to deliver free, you know years ago. They delivered for years and years and years, deliver groceries.

Dodson: Now since we've been talking about stores that brings up something connected with them. The great depression of 1929. Do you remember what that did to stores and life in the valley?

Allington: Do I remember! Yes. It really wiped alot of people out. We lost alot of property that we had invested in, we had interest in, you know, and couldn't keep up the payments so we had to lose it. But we had alot of friends who lost everything. It was terrible. It was very terrible. We were fortunate to get by as well as we did and that's when the women had to go out to work that was the first time I think that women really went out to work. Most women stayed home and took care of their families, you know, and there were more civic things going on for women at that time, after that everything went down, like our women's club, they used to have a membership of 250, they do well now to have 100. Because, all the young people work. I mean the young women work. You see it takes time to be in a club.



Dodson: Do you feel then, that that's the reason for the clubs going down in membership?

Allington: Oh sure. There's no women home to go.

Dodson: Your husband was in business for himself during the time of the depression?

Allington: Oh yes, he's been in business all the time with exception to the three months when we first arrived, he's been in business for himself all the time.

Paula: You talked about World War I, could you tell us what the Valley was like during World War II? About, was there rationing out here?

Allington: Oh yes, there was rationing and of course, we had the blackouts you know. At that time, my husband and I and four other families were playing badminton, that was quite the rage, you know at that time and of course we were young enough to play badminton and we all had badminton's in our backyard and so we'd been playing badminton for years. Well, then when the war broke out of course, well, we had to keep the lights out, you know, to have the black out, so we all had these black curtains, you know that you pull down, shades, the black shades on the outside. They'd be black on the outside so that your house would just look dark, at night, you know from the outside. And my three sons were in the service, two of them were in the Navy and one was in the Air Force and they call it trainer in the Air Force and one was over in Australia and the other was in... I don't know, the, what do you call it, I can't think, I'm trying to recall. I can't think the name of it now.

Dodson: Well we had quite a variety of different ties during the war.

Allington: Anyway, they all came home safe, thank goodness. So we were fortunate it seemed like.

Paula: Did they ever do anything with husband?

Allington: Selective Service, I guess is what they called it, he got it.

Dodson: He was on one of the boards? He was on one of the Selective Service Boards?

Allington: Selective Service Boards, yes.

Dodson: Did the Valley do any celebrating after World War II?

Allington: Oh, yes. Lots of drum beating, you know, dancing and just whatever, you know, they could do.

Dodson: You yourself, were you employed during the war?

Allington: All I did was stay home and keep the home fires burning.

Dodson: Well, now that was pretty important too.



Allington: Around the time the children grew up and some of them married and away from underfoot, you know, why then we decided to do a little traveling. So I never did do anything civic minded you know.

Dodson: Well, I would say that you furnished three sons for the service. That was a civic act certainly.

Allington: Yes, I guess. Now I have thirteen grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, that kind of keeps me busy now. That is, they don't keep me busy, but by the time I make the brown seamen and entertaining first one and then the other I kind of keep busy too, but I enjoy them all.

Dodson: You have to do a little bookkeeping on the birthdays of each one?

Allington: Oh do I! I certainly do. But they're such a joy. They really are.

Dodson: Well, now tell me since you mentioned your children, your grandchildren, what do you think of the difference in fashion as between your children and when they were in school and your grandchildren? Do you notice any difference in the way they dress?

Allington: Well, of course, the girls all wear pants now days, and the boys wear long hair, so sometimes you can't tell which is which. That's about the only difference I guess. I can't say that I like some of this, but go along with it. I think they are kind of changing back, as far as the long hair is concerned. I think that they're coming back again. Don't you?

Dodson: Yes, I tend to think you're right because I know at the college there were some years when I felt that if a small child wandered into my classroom he would be terrified by the bearded faces in front of him and now I don't think that would be true.

Allington: No I think they're kind of getting away from that.

Dodson: You do find the pants part of it quite a bit different from when you were in school or when your children were in school?

Allington: Oh yes, it seems like the young people say they're so comfortable. I wore them when we played badminton. That was the only time and I never cared about it any other time, but they say they are so much more comfortable, so I suppose if they are, why....

Dodson: Why, you have learned to be open minded on this?

Allington: Yes, that's right. If they want to wear them that's up to them.

Dodson: Well, I know Paula will be glad to hear that. What effect have the earthquakes had on you since you got out here. Did they frighten you? You've gone through quite a few, the Santa Barbara earthquake, the Long Beach quake, the T earthquake, the Sylmar quake?

Allington: Oh yes, they didn't seem to bother me at all except the last one, the '71 quake. The only reason that bothered me because I



Allington: wanted to go up to Van Nuys to see what damage it had done and in crossing Van Nuys Boulevard, why I was hit by a car. And fortunately no bones were broken, but I was terribly bruised and banged up for a while. But, so I never will forget that I guess, but the earthquakes themselves don't seem to bother me any.

You didn't suffer any damage to your property as a result of the Sylmar quake?

No, no we didn't. I was ironing at the time and the ironing board fell down, oh that wasn't that one it was another one, when the ironing board fell.

The Sylmar one struck very early in the morning about 6:00. I was going to say that you really begin your ironing early.

That was the Long Beach one, when the ironing board fell down, and scared me to death.

Were you living in this particular location on Sylmar Avenue when the Sylmar...

No, I was here, that must of been February and I moved here the first of March, right after that. The one on Vanowen. You're not acquainted with this probably. Van Nuys.

Well, some parts of it. I had a little trouble finding your address.

You know where the California bench is up here on the corner? I don't know if you know of the Holly's Dress Shop, well anyway, my home is there. From Holly's Dress Shop you could, the home is still there but they built out to the street and the dress shop is in front of the house. We lived there for forty years. It's really a very nice Spanish type home. One of the nicest ones when we bought it in the Valley and it's lasted all this time and still in good order you know. So they kept it, they didn't tear it down.

Paula: Now you were in the Valley, earlier there was alot of flooding?

Oh yes, water used to run down Tyrone Avenue. It was just terrible, but then we built the Pacoima Dam, you know, and the Tujunga Dam and that stopped the flooding.

Paula: Did you ever have any damage to your property?

No.

Paula: When was it, 1937 I believe there was a big flood, with the Tujunga Wash. Do you remember that one?

Yes.

'37 or '38?

1937.



Allington: Yes, I think it even came down Van Nuys Boulevard, at that time. I think that my husband said that it came into his building on Van Nuys Boulevard, you know. And they had put up sand bags and everything. I didn't go down to see it but I remember him telling me about it. I think that was probably the big flood that he was talking about.

Dodson: Your house was on higher ground so you had no problems?

Allington: Yes. It was on this side. Evidently it came right down Van Nuys Boulevard and entered some of those buildings on the Boulevard.

Paula: Can I ask you what you think about the change in the Valley since you've been here?

Allington: Well, of course it changed from all these Orange groves and the Walnut groves and everything. Well and besides that all these shopping centers you know and Van Nuys used to be such nice place to shop, you know, and now it's just going downhill because everybody goes to shopping centers. So the business people have hard work getting along, I guess. Everybody's moving out and going to shopping centers.

Dodson: Well, you feel it's hard on the merchants. A lot of Van Nuys Boulevard?

Allington: Oh, yes, very hard on them. That's why they are moving. They wouldn't move otherwise.

Dodson: I guess this is happening to the main streets in one town after another.

Allington: It is, it's happening all over. It started in the East first I think. I know we used to go back East and see how the towns were deteriorating back there, you know. And now the same thing out here.

Dodson: Do you see a difference in the smog situation since you have been here? When you first came here was there any such thing as smog that you were conscious of.

Allington: We had smog because, it was a different kind of smog. It was a smog from the smudge pots.

Dodson: That was a pretty disagreeable time wasn't it?

Allington: Yes a greasy, you know, so we always seemed to have smog. It was called smudge then because in the cold weather they would light these smudge pots in the orange groves and that was so greasy, you know, and the sky would just be black. I mean it would really be black. It would look worse than our smog now. And the curtains would get so greasy and dirty, you know.

Dodson: Would this get on the outside of the houses?

Allington: Oh sure, but then we would have rain to wash it off. Because it always was in the winter, you know when we had it. When it was cold that was when we would have the smudge and then we would also have the rain which would help to wash it off from



Allington: the outside but in the inside, you know, why the walls and everything, you'd really have to do a good job of cleaning.

Dodson: It would penetrate inside the houses then?

Allington: Oh sure. Your curtain and drapes and everything would be dirty, you know, you'd have to clean them. Some winters would be worse than others.

Dodson: Well, what was this like as far as breathing it was concerned?

Allington: Well, I don't know if that bothered the breathing as much as this smog, because it was thicker I guess. I don't know, I don't remember.

Dodson: You didn't hear of peoples whose eyes were smarting and that sort of thing?

Allington: No. I don't remember that because maybe it was a different kind. I don't remember that. But I sure remember the sand storms they used to have. I remember one time I had just worked so hard cleaning the house all day long and I was so tired when I went to bed at night because I had really worked hard, but I felt so good because the house was so nice and clean and everything and my husband when he went to bed I had evidently hung his pants over the chair and the next morning when we got up, that was the only clean spot in the house and I was still sleeping and he felt sorry for me so he dressed real quietly and went to work and let me sleep and when I got up and saw that, I was just ready to cry. Everything was an inch thick of dirt on the windowsill. Everything was just terrible. And it's not in this house up here because it was built better, this was over on Amos street and when we first came, and so I started to shake things out the door and my neighbor lady said, I wouldn't clean if I were you because we will have three days of this. She was right we had three days of it.

Dodson: Did that keep up until the Valley was built up with buildings?

Allington: Yes, you know, until some of these fields were built up. If the fields didn't have anything on grain or whatnot why then, the wind would blow and then we would get the sand it was awful. You would have thought that would have discouraged me, but it didn't. It did for the time being, but I got over it.

Dodson: But you still preferred that to going back to Michigan?

Allington: Oh yes, I'd say.

Dodson: Well of course, if you've been sort of reading about the sort of winter they had there....

Allington: I have relatives back there and they it was just terrible.

Dodson: Is that right. So as between the two you will take our earthquakes and our sandstorms and that sort of thing.

Allington: Oh yes.

Dodson: Now go right ahead Mrs. Allington:

Allington: Getting back to the time I do see alot of difference in that because years ago we never saw them locking the doors. Unless they were going on a vacation or something like that. Why we always left it unlocked, we close everything and then I would go downtown, close the backdoor and just leave and then when the children go older and went out in the evening we would leave one of the doors open and think nothing of it. My goodness, now I won't even go out and get the mail hardly without locking the door, you know, it's just so different. You just don't feel so safe. When you're walking on the street you just don't have that carefree feeling nowadays that you used to have, you know.

Dodson: Do you have any explanation for that change? What in your opinion has caused it?

Allington: I haven't the slightest idea. I just don't know. Whether it's all this dope that they now have. I don't know whether that causes it or not. Some people seem to think that it doesn't make any difference. I just don't know what causes.

Dodson: Well, I don't have any answer for that either. I just wondered if you had an idea. But I certainly don't as to the reasons for the change, but I think it's not confined to the Valley I think it's true of the nation as a whole.

Allington: Yes, it is. It really is, I don't know if it makes a difference.

Dodson: Your husband played a rather prominent part in the Valley, can you tell us about some of those jobs he's held, positions he's held and so on?

Allington: Well, didn't I tell you about that?

Dodson: Well, I wondered what sort of problems came up when he was President of Chamber of Commerce and that sort of thing? Do you recall?

Allington: Oh, goodness.

Dodson: Things he used to talk about that he was taking satisfaction of rapport or the things that were bothering him?

Allington: It was so long ago, I just don't remember.

Dodson: Now you are going to make people think you are older than you are when you say a thing like that.

Allington: I am. Oh, dear, I just can't remember those things, I really can't.

Dodson: Well, maybe he was a person that never brought the problems of the Valley home? Talked about.

Allington: Yes, not too much. I don't think he did bring his troubles home, as far as that goes.

Paula: When we were talking about World War II, do you know what the



Paula: feeling of the Valley was towards the Japanese people living here, or were there very many people, Japanese descendants living here?

Allington: Yes. I don't think that they thought that the people that lived right around here were any worse than the American citizen, after all they were American citizens, you know. And I think that some of them felt that it was too bad that they were isolated the way that they were. Of course, you didn't know just how many were alright and how many weren't. But I think that, I think sometimes they went a little bit too far.

Paula: Have there ever been any minority problems at all in the Valley to your knowledge?

Allington: Not that I know of. We never really had too many, until lately. It was, we had a few Mexicans down here on Albert Street when we first, in the first few years we were here, that worked in the brick yards, but I always thought they behaved themselves. And I don't think that we ever had any trouble. I think they were better behaved than they are now. Maybe they are any worse than we are sometimes.

Dodson: Of course, I think that we can make that statement for everybody.

Allington: Yes that's what I say.

Dodson: We hear a lot about busing at the time. If your children were in elementary school would you be willing to have them bused to other parts of the city?

Allington: I don't think so because how could you be interested in the things that they were doing if they were way off in another school. Now when my children were here I did go to P.T.A. and interested in things like that. In fact, I was secretary of the elementary P.T.A. and I have a life membership in the high school P.T.A., but, so I was active as far as school things were concerned. But I wouldn't have been if they were way off some place. You just don't have that close feeling, I don't think. We would be too far to go for one thing. A lot of driving, maybe you wouldn't have an extra car to go. A lot of people don't have two cars. For a long time I didn't have two cars and my husband was in the automobile business, but however, I was home taking care of the children and had my groceries delivered so I didn't need a car.

Dodson: Well, if you had been faced with that problem, would you have taken your children out of the public schools then, put them in private schools, do you think?

Allington: Well, I don't know what I would have done in that case. Now I don't think that I would have liked it. Yes, I don't think I would like it.

Dodson: So far in our interviewing we haven't found anyone who did like it. So you're not in a minority on that.

Allington: Well, it's just too bad and if they wanted to have after school activities, what are they going to do? Have two different buses, one take the children home who aren't in the activities and another take them home, those that are. I don't know how they are going to work it out.

Dodson: Incidentally, I was listening to a broadcast today by the superintendent of schools. He's not sure how they are going to pay for all this.

Allington: No. Mr. Novo.

Dodson: No, Johnson the superintendent.

Allington: Oh, Johnson, oh yes. Mr. Novo has been on lately alot.

Dodson: Yes, he is a member of the board of education.

Allington: Yes. Anyway.

Dodson: Another problem we hear about is whether is the question of whether or not the Valley should secede from Los Angeles. And form a separate city. How do you stand on that?

Allington: Maybe we would be better off, I don't know, but I think that L.A. would be worse off because they get alot of our tax money and in a way it would be too bad to see L.A. go down the drain. I don't know whether that would be good or not.

Dodson: So if you were voting on it right now you just not quite sure how you would vote?

Allington: No, I would have to look into it. What do you think?

Dodson: Well I have sort of mixed feelings on that to tell the truth. I'm sort of the position that you are in. I'm not quite sure what the best thing to do would be. One person that we interviewed pointed out that the economic situation of the two areas was so mixed up together that he didn't see how they could be separated. In other words, there are so many things here in the Valley that the Valley would have to buy out from Los Angeles, that it would be almost impossible to finance it.

Allington: Oh, I see, you don't know all the ins and out's, you know, it would be hard to tell.

Dodson: Yes, there would be an enormous bill they would have to pay to buy out structures and the facilities that belong to the city as a whole.

Allington: Yes, and there's the water I guess.

Dodson: Yes that would be quite a problem. I believe Los Angeles is forbidden to sell Owens Valley water to any area that is not part of the city.

Allington: Oh, that would keep us in I would think.

Dodson: I think that was the thing that brought the Valley into the city to begin with.



Allington: Yes it was.

Paula: What do you think was the most important event that ever happened in the Valley.

Allington: Well, I think bringing the water in was the most important. And then, of course, the flood control would be another important time. Let's see...

Paula: Do you think there is anything in the Valley ever did that was wrong?

Allington: Probably was. I can't imagine there not being.

Dodson: There isn't anything you think of that you regretted at the time that you wished had turned out differently?

Allington: Well, it's too bad that when Van Nuys was laid out that they didn't plan for more parking or big stores or something. Whitsett you know, and this big square over here, it's too bad that he didn't set that aside for just some big store or something.

Dodson: Now what square is that? Where is it located exactly?

Allington: You know where Buntley's is over here? That whole square from Vanowen to Kittridge and from Van Nuys Boulevard to Vester. Now that whole thing is almost right in the middle of it. The whole thing, it's too bad that he didn't make something big right there.

Dodson: Were you acquainted with him personally? Did you ever meet him?

Allington: Oh yes, I was in his home. I don't believe that we were very good friends or anything but I've been in his home because his wife came to see the Meter's quite a bit and she had us there one night and the family there, it was a barbeque, husbands and all one night and then I saw her, you know, through the Meters so, she was very pleasant.

Dodson: Did you consider Mr. Whitsett the founder of Van Nuys then in a sense?

Allington: Did I what?

Dodson: Consider him to be the founder of Van Nuys?

Allington: Well, he and Van Nuys must of been I assume.

Dodson: Did you ever meet any of the Van Nuys family by the way?

Allington: No, not any of the Van Nuys. No, let's see, Hubble was one of the first ones and Mrs. Feebee Hubble was the Present of the Van Nuys Women's Club. I liked her very much and let's see Mrs. Mulholland was one of them, not Mrs. Mulholland, Mrs. Houghton, I mean. Mrs. Houghton was one of the first her husband was one of the founders and she was, now Van Nuys Women's Club would be one of the monuments I would think of Van Nuys because it's one of the oldest buildings in Van Nuys

Allington: and Mrs. Houghton loaned three thousand dollars to build the Van Nuys Women's Club in 1915, I think it was, anyway they moved in in 1917. The Club was formed before that but they were not moved into their new clubhouse until 1917 and Mrs. Ida Bailey, who lived across the street, donated the land that it's on.

Dodson: Is that building still standing?

Allington: Yes, we meet there all the time.

Dodson: Is that right. Where is it located exactly?

Allington: On Sylvan Street near Kester. Just off of Kester on Sylvan. Did you know at that time that Sylvan Street was named Virginia Avenue?

Dodson: No, I do know that a number of the streets have had their names changed.

Allington: Do you know which ones are first?

Dodson: I know a good many of them. We have an old real estate map of 1910 which shows many of the old names that have since disappeared.

Allington: Yes, Canoga Park was Owensmouth. Let's see that's Marion and Zelzah, is now I think Northridge and Mission Acres out here, I mean Sepulveda used to be Mission Acres and, well I don't mean Sepulveda, but Panorama City out that way used to be Mission Acres but all the lots were in acres.

Dodson: Do you remember when Sherman Way came up what is now Chandler and turned into what is now Van Nuys Blvd. and then went west?

Allington: Yes.

Dodson: That to me was one of the most surprising changes.

Allington: Yes they changed all their names I guess through the town. Just like in Hollywood isn't that, it used to be called...

Dodson: Lankershim.

Allington: Lankershim, yes.

Dodson: My understanding, it was called Toluca before that even.

Allington: It was.

Dodson: I think that was the earliest name before it was turned to Lankershim. Toluca I think is an Indian word.

Allington: Oh, maybe, I don't know.

Dodson: Is there anything in Valley history that you thought brought you especially happiness? You thought was especially good?

Allington: Oh, I can't think of anything right now.



Dodson: Anything especially good or bad about the Valley?

Allington: Not anymore so. Just every day.

Dodson: Now you told us about the building of the Women's Club, which we're interested in because it's an old building, can you think of any other old buildings which are still standing?

Allington: Well, there is that Sylvan Hotel. It isn't occupied right now but it seems like I heard the other day that they were going to do something about it.

Dodson: I think there was an article in the paper about it, that it was to be refurbished or something of the kind.

Allington: Yes. That's an old old building.

Paula: Where is that located?

Allington: On the corner of Sylvan and Vesper.

Dodson: Sylvan and Vesper, yes, I think we should go past that and take a look at it.

Allington: Let's see, some old buildings? You wondered about monuments.

Dodson: Yes were interested in all of those things.

Allington: Well, there's Memory Gardens out here, you know.

Dodson: No. No, at least I didn't know about them.

Allington: In front of the Mission.

Dodson: Oh, that park in front of the Mission?

Allington: Yes.

Dodson: I see. I didn't recognize the name.

Allington: Yes, it's kept up by San Fernando. I can't think of any other old buildings. I don't know when the Petit's building was built. Have you interviewed Mrs. Wallace Dickey?

Dodson: Yes.

Allington: So you know all about them. They're one of the first ones, and Petit's. Have you interviewed Stanley Petit?

Dodson: Not yet because they haven't had time, but we have approached them. As soon as they were able to find time to see us.

Allington: Yes. They would be most interesting. And George Chapman?

Dodson: No. Now that name we don't know.

Allington: Well, he's kind of elderly. He's retired now, but his father was one of the first ones. There's a lot of builders, development builders, his son is too a builder.

Paula: Is that C-h-a-p-m-a-n?

Allington: Yes, m-a-n.

Dodson: Do you happen to know where he lives or what his address is so we could get a hold of him?

Allington: Yes. I can get it from the telephone book. Oh, maybe the barn would be an old building. Do you remember James Jeffrey's barn?

Dodson: Yes. That's been taken down to Knott's Berry Farm, hasn't it?

Allington: No, that's here in Van Nuys.

Dodson: Oh it is I thought that was in...

Allington: James Jeffrey the boxer.

Dodson: Yes.

Allington: Well that was here on Victory Blvd. here in Van Nuys.

Dodson: Oh it was, I thought that was in Burbank or Toluca Lake.

Allington: No. See if you, do you want to read the book on it.

Dodson: The book on that.

Allington: Do you want to read it.

Dodson: We'll look it up. Yes.

Allington: Because maybe he's dead but he's one of the very first builders too in Van Nuys. I don't mean builder's, I mean builder in business. One of the first founders, co-founder in the builders, the business building he and Greg Steer in Van Nuys. It would be interesting if you wanted to read up on it. Of course, you want to put it on there. Oh, how about Edgar Rice Burroughs? Have you heard anything about him?

Dodson: We knew that he bought out land which he renamed Tarzana, in honor of Tarzan.

Allington: Right.

Dodson: That was how Tarzana got it's name.

Allington: Yes, you have all that.

Dodson: Yes, that we know about.

Allington: And, of course Mr. Nordvold, I told you about him, about having the first few families in Van Nuys. To locate. They were the very first few families to locate in Van Nuys. Adolph Nordvold. The Mendenhall's, have you contacted the Mendenhall's?

Dodson: Not yet, but I imagine that they would be very interesting people to interview.



Allington: Yes. Well, think of the newspaper, you know. Van Nuys News. And McDonald's, have you contacted them?

Dodson: No.

Allington: He's a really good man. Was, he's retired now.

Dodson: What is his first name?

Allington: Russ.

Dodson: Russ?

ALLINGTON: Russell McDonald. Let's see, John Plummer, one of them's dead I don't remember.

Dodson: One of the Plummer's lives in Bakersfield and we did go up to Bakersfield to see him.

Allington: Oh you did, yes. Which one? One of them I think died.

Dodson: I don't remember the first name.

Allington: Well, there's Millan and John and Jack, of the seniors, I don't know which one you saw.

Dodson: Well, one of them lives with his daughter in Bakersfield.

Allington: Well was it a man or woman?

Dodson: Man.

Allington: Oh, well then it's Jack Plummer. Mollie evidently died. That was his wife. Oh, let's see. I thought maybe you might like to interview, but you have already interviewed some of those that I just gave you.

Dodson: If you can think of some other stories, interesting things that we haven't asked about at all, we would be very glad to hear about.

Allington: I was trying to think of some, because I was thinking, oh goodness what do I know.

Dodson: Now you see you know quite a bit.

You have been listening to an interview with Mrs. Clara Allington of 6640 Sylmar, Van Nuys. The interview was conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson, Curator of The Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum and by Miss Paula Boyer, field deputy to Dr. Dodson. The date is March 26, 1977.

\*This was transcribed from afore mentioned interview, which is on tape, February 1982.